

the excellent quality of indigenous breed and try to protect that indigenous breed, for example, take the cows like *Tharparkar*, *Sahiwal*. These are indigenous breeds, which are quite useful. Day by day, we are not getting a big number of these types of breeds. It is our responsibility to protect them. Certain programmes have been taken to expand and protect these types of breeds. Second thing is cross-breeding. A massive programme has been taken for that also. We have brought up to 20 per cent of cows in this country under cross breeding. But cross breeding is not a solution. We should not totally depend on cross breeding. We have to keep a balance between cross breeding and indigenous breed. That is the overall thinking of the Government. Now, so far as various schemes are concerned, there are certain schemes which have been introduced by the Government of India like National Project for Cattle and Buffalo breeding, Foder Development, National Scheme for the Dairy Poultry Venture Capital Fund, Intensive Dairy Development Programme and Strengthening Infrastructure for the Quality and Clean Milk Production. In fact, this scheme has been recently introduced in October 2004 with initial provision of 30 per cent outlay. The objective of the scheme is to improve the quality of the raw milk produced and procured at the village level. Substantial financial support has been provided by the Government of India to the scheme.

*245. [The question(s) (SHRI RAJ KUMAR DHOOT was absent. For answer vide page 31.)]

Fresh approvals for field trials of GM crops

*246. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the Government's response following a Supreme Court directive barring it from issuing fresh approvals of field trials of Genetically- Modified (GM) crops;

(b) whether Government propose to direct independent enquiry into the long term economic viability of GM crops in the Indian environment;

(c) If so, the details thereof; and

(d) If not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI A. RAJA):

(a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The Government of India has not approved any fresh field trials on transgenic crops, after the Supreme Court direction dated 22.9.2006. However, field trials for transgenic mustard developed by University of Delhi South campus, New Delhi have been permitted as per Hon'ble Supreme Court order dated 13.10.2006 passed on an appeal filed by Delhi University.

(b) to (d) There is no proposal to direct independent inquiry into the long term economic viability of GM crops in the Indian environment.

As per the prevailing statutory rules, procedures and guidelines under the Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells, 1989 notified under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986. The safety, efficacy, agronomic advantage and economic viability of the introduced trait in GM crops are assessed on a case to case basis by the regulatory agencies prior to according environmental release of the product. No prior determination that GM crops in general or a specific GM crop in particular; is, or is not viable in Indian conditions is scientifically defensible. The evidence has to be generated, and evaluated in each case in the Indian context, through properly defined Protocols.

SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Sir, in the recent past, we have seen that there are wide-ranging protest against genetically modified crops in Haryana and Tamil Nadu. Fearing the backlash, Chhattisgarh Government has already banned the field trials of GM crops. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government of India is taking any steps to assuage the feelings of farmers or to mollify them.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): Sir, the Ministry is aware of the protest at various places. We have received information that some *kisans* have burnt GM rice crops in Karnal. Sir, the trials have been conducted in contained conditions and is presently at the level of research. Therefore, they have not come for open field trials before the Government of India.

SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Has the Government got any public regulatory policy of framework for the use of GM crops? I am talking about the end-products. Secondly, Is the Government changing the policy about the commercial sale of GM rice?

SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA: Sir, I would like to answer the first question about rice. Sir, we have not permitted the GM rice in the country. Regarding GM food and GM crops, we have stringent laws, regulations and guidelines and they are being governed by these Acts and regulations.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, I am concerned about BT seeds, which are genetically engineered and foreign-based. It has been prohibited in Japan, America, and some other countries even in Mexico. Its ill effect has been well known. Now, it has been imported and introduced in India with the result lots of objections have been raised. Recently, in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, it was done, and it was stoutly protested. I would like to know from the Government about its policy on this kind of BT seeds, and the real effect of its introduction in India.

SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA: Sir, at present, 62 varieties are commercially released in the country in various zones. Regarding their viability, Sir, the BT cotton was introduced in 2002, and the area was around 72,000 acres. But in 2006, the area of BT cotton has increased manifold, that is 86,00,000 acres. It is economically viable, and it is doing very well. Bt cotton is prevalent in almost various parts of the world. BT cotton is grown in Japan, U.S. and many other countries.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, it seems the animals, which took the crops, were reported to have died.

श्री सभापति: इन्होंने जो बात कही है, उसे आप देखिए।

SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: Sir, I am taking advantage of the fact. That the Minister for Agriculture is also present here. The Seeds Bill, which we passed recently, makes a specific provision that the GM seeds will not be registered in India.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: It is not passed.

SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: Okay. Sir, that has been cleared by the Standing Committee, and it said that the GM seeds will not be registered in this country. Now, given the experience that the Minister has stated, how does it go with the provision of the Bill here?

SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA: Sir, pardon me, but this question is related to agriculture. I want to know whether you have asked me or the Agriculture Minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Agriculture Minister.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): Sir, the Bill was sent to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee sent it, with its recommendations, to the Government. The Government has not taken a final view on it. We would like to take a final view on this, and we would like to bring this Bill before Parliament as early as possible. When we will be going to take a final view, we will take a view on this also.

SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Sir, it has been proved all over India that the GM crops came to the destruction of our traditional farming, especially in the light of the experience that we have got in the BT cotton in Andhra Pradesh. Will the Minister be pleased to state the policy of the Government with regard to this crucial issue of genetically modified crops?

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, genetically modified crops are not new to this country. Of course, the hon. Member, Dr. Malaisamy, put a question saying that some of the genetically modified crops are banned in the developed countries like Australia and America. Of course, the fact is quite contrary. Particularly, BT cotton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you mean to say that there is no ban in other countries?

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, there is no ban in other countries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you sure?

SHRI A. RAJA: Yes, Sir. Transgenic modified crops, that is, genetically modified crops, are approved for commercial cultivation in the world. For cotton, it is in Japan, Australia, U.S., China, Mexico, South Africa, Argentina, India and Indonesia.

Sir, these are the countries which have approved genetically modified crops. The general apprehension in the mind of the people is, the genetically modified crops may be detrimental to the bio-safety of the people and the animals. Sir, with all my sincerity, I can submit before the House that we are having research system in place in the Agricultural Ministry and in the Health Ministry. Our own laboratories are also there. Nowhere did we come across such a detrimental outcome from the BT Cotton. Even no medical inference, which may have been drawn, in any quarter of this country, or, in any quarter of the world, has come to our notice so far.